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ABSTRACT

Under the guidance of alert adults, young children can develop new understandings, learn valuable skills, and acquire positive attitudes toward life and learning by taking part in activities in the kitchen. This book provides ideas that parents and parent surrogates can use to provide experiences in the kitchen that will contribute to children's intellectual growth. The activities discussed are varied and offer a range of opportunities for child involvement. Several categories of activities are included. Exploring activities are those that allow children to freely examine materials. Cooking experiences allow children to handle food and assist in the preparation of foods. Chores activities offer experiences which lead to the formation of good work habits and responsible behaviors. Play activities encourage children to express themselves freely and creatively. A section on talking and storytelling provides suggestions for promoting open communication, language development, use of symbolism, and growth in imagination. (21 references) (BB)

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IN THE KITCHEN WITH YOUR YOUNG CHILD

By
Louise Giddings

PS 019220

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IN THE KITCHEN WITH YOUR YOUNG CHILD

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PREFACE

The care of young children in the home is not a responsibility to be taken lightly. Although childrearing can be satisfying and rewarding work, it can also be demanding and challenging. In the Kitchen with Your Young Child was written to assist parents and other individuals who assume the task of caring for young children. It offers suggestions for guiding children in work and play activities in the home, particularly in the kitchen. Hopefully, these activities will not only stimulate interests and learning on the part of children, but will bring children many happy moments in the home.

Louise Giddings
1989

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Understanding The Young Child

For young children, the key to learning is activity. Young children learn about their environments as they interact with objects, people, and events. They grow strong and their perceptions deepen as they toss balls, splash water, or imitate parents sweeping, shopping, and gardening. Nature has equipped children for the kinds of experiences which aid in their development. Children between two and seven years of age are "active, curious, experimental, creative, imaginative, talkative and disconcertingly frank."[1]

Children under the age of eight years require many direct and concrete experiences in the exploration of their world. Such experiences lay the foundation for dealing with the world more abstractly later in life. Young children are not yet in a position to be logical, abstract, and sedentary. For them, sensory contact is essential.[2]

Young children tend to center on one dimension of an object or event at a time. Although their perceptions of the world are constantly expanding, their thought processes are still developing and their concepts are really pre-concepts. If children are to learn that every object has more than one characteristic, they need opportunities to explore and manipulate objects. In this manner, they gain

insight into the properties of objects.[3] It is through such direct and first hand experiences that children come to know about things in the world around them. Since children learn by being allowed to explore things in their environment, all individuals concerned with the rearing and well being of young children can contribute to the growth and development of these children through the environments and the experiences that they make available to them.

The home and family are uniquely important in a young child's development. The experiences provided in the home are believed to be more important in the overall development of a child than all the training and experiences provided by formal educational systems. As Fraiberg points out in The Magic Years, "All the wisdom in the world about child-rearing cannot, by itself, replace the intimate human ties, family ties as the center of human development."[4] The learning that the home fosters can outweigh all others in providing the proper foundation for the physical, emotional, and intellectual development of children.

Parents are constantly being reminded of the importance of the home in the rearing of children. They are told of the need to spend time with young children, to provide children with learning materials and activities, to communicate with children, and to read to children. Certainly, there are many wonderful things that happen with many children in homes everyday. Much of what is done is intuitive on the part of

parents or parent surrogates who are loving, patient, and have some notion of how to help children grow.

Yet, new ideas and suggestions as to interesting things to do with children can be helpful. Parents sometimes gain new ideas and insights from other parents, from educators, and from reading. This book is designed to provide ideas to parents and parent surrogates concerning experiences which can be provided in the home to delight children while contributing to the intellectual growth and development of children.

Spotlight On The Kitchen

Parents, particularly mothers, of young children are usually responsible for the daily chores associated with the operation and maintenance of the home. For most parents, a significant amount of time is usually spent each day in the kitchen preparing meals, washing dishes, and cleaning. Moreover, the kitchen is quite often the gathering room in a home. It is the place where family members come together to talk, eat, listen to music, and even play table games. Since most young children tend not to be found not far away from the protective eyes of parents and other family members, it is only natural that they too spend much of their time in and around the kitchen.

In the kitchen as in other areas of the home, three, four, five, and six year olds require and seek adult attention and guidance. Young children are active, curious and inquisitive. They want to know about things and to do things. They want to touch, taste, see and smell things. If young children are to grow to be well adjusted and healthy, they need many opportunities to satisfy these inclinations which are a natural part of the process of growth and development.

Parents of young children are also teachers of young children. Through the manner in which they relate to their children, parents help to establish the foundation for all subsequent learning. The hope should be to build a

foundation for intelligent thinking, responsible behavior, openness to new ideas, and respect for self and others.

Since the home is the primary institution in which parent-child interaction takes place, parents should seize every opportunity within the home to create a stimulating, tension-free atmosphere in which children can learn through work and play.

Perhaps no setting provides a greater wealth of materials and opportunities to satiate the interests of young children than the kitchen. It is a laboratory for exploratory activities as well as a studio for creativity, fantasy, and daydreaming. Under the guidance of alert adults, young children can develop new understandings, learn many valuable skills, and acquire positive attitudes toward life and learning through activities in the kitchen.

Using This Book

The activities included in this book are varied and offer a range of opportunities for child involvement. There are those that require children to act independently as well as those that necessitate cooperative child-adult involvement. Some activities can be handled by a two and a half or three year old while others are more appropriate for a slightly older child. Some activities may interest one child but not another.

Several categories of activities are included in this book. "Exploring" activities are those that help children to freely examine materials. "Cooking" experiences allow children to handle food and to assist in the preparation of foods. The "Chores" section offers experiences which lead to the formation of good work habits and responsible behaviors. "Play" activities encourage free, creative expression on the part of children. The final section "Talking and Storytelling" gives suggestions for promoting open communication, language development, use of symbolism, and growth in imagination.

Flexibility and creativity should be employed in the use of this book. The reader should take in what is needed, but also expand or modify ideas and suggestions. The important question to be kept in mind is "How can my young child be involved more and more in learning experiences in the home?" The ideas offered can help parents to find ways to stimulate

children's learning and ways to spend more time with their children in mutually satisfying ways.

Many of the activities suggested require adults to be spontaneous and to capitalize on what is taking place at a particular moment. For example, when making a dish that calls for boiled eggs, a parent may wish to call his or her five year old over to help remove the shells from the eggs. Other activities call for considerable planning. This would be the case when the activity is vegetable stamping or dying eggs.

Parents should also capitalize on children's interests and curiosity. Questions from children such as "What is that?" or "Can I help?" should not be ignored. Likewise parents should take cues from children's interests and everyday activities. When a child likes to play in water, it may indicate that the child might be disposed to engaging in exploratory activities such as "Sinking and Floating" and "Air in Water." Parents can take cues on when to initiate activities and they can also take cues as to when to terminate activities. Children can play and work with adults in the kitchen. However, adults should always be sensitive to the needs, capabilities, and limitations of children in providing learning activities.

Apart from adult-directed activities, time should be allowed for free play and independent activities such as water play, play with dough, and drawing. It would be helpful to children to have appropriate materials

conveniently located for easy access. Such a provision would allow young children opportunities to make decisions and to work or play independently. A low cabinet space or a small toy bin in a corner of the kitchen might be used. Parents should keep in mind that if children are to grow toward independence, they need to being early in life to have experiences and opportunities to act independently.

Guidance and supervision on the part of parents are essential in providing worthwhile and enjoyable experiences for children in the kitchen. Parents will find it necessary to use personal judgement and imagination in determining suitable activities based on the capabilities, interests, and personalities of children. Through it all, it must be remembered that each child develops in his or her own unique way and must be respected as an individual.

From The Author's Kitchen

One day, my son, Gordon, who was five years old at the time, was home from school because of a holiday. During the morning he asked if I would read Arthur's Christmas Cookies by Lillian Hoban to him.[5] In this story, Arthur, a delightful little monkey, bakes cookies for his family and friends. He becomes very excited about being able to give to others, particularly his parents, something which he made. As Arthur is preparing the cookies, however, a friend hands him the glass jar with salt rather than the one with sugar and Arthur ends up with hard salt cookies instead of sugar cookies. Fortunately, Arthur realizes that the hard cookies could be painted, made into Christmas ornaments, and still be given as presents. So, all is not lost.

Gordon listened very intently to this reading of the story which was about the third time in a week that he had heard it. Following the conclusion of the story, he announced that he would like to make some cookies. "Not salt cookies," he emphasized, "real cookies with flour and butter and sugar." At this time I told him that we had to go on an errand and then we would stop by the park for a while, but perhaps we would make the cookies later on during the day.

Interestingly, the idea of making cookies remained on Gordon's mind throughout all our activities that morning because on the way home from the park, he turned to me and said "I'm going to make cookies when I get home." I told him

that it would be just fine with me but first we would have lunch. Apparently, Gordon forgot what I had said to him because as soon as we walked into the house he washed his hands and said that he was ready to begin making the cookies. I reminded him that we would make the cookies as soon as we had finished lunch. So after a lunch of left-over chicken, noodles, raw carrots, and apple slices, we were ready to begin work on the cookies.

Gordon informed me that he knew exactly what to do. Therefore, all he needed from me were the flour, sugar, and butter. I advised him that since we wanted the cookies to turn out just right, it might be a good idea to use a recipe. The recipe, I explained, would prevent us from using too much sugar or too little flour. Gordon agreed that this was a good idea. I then looked through my Fannie Farmer Cookbook for something simple as well as something in keeping with Gordon's desire to use Arthur's recipe of flour, sugar and butter.[6] As I flipped through the pages of the cookbook Gordon asked a couple of times "Did you find a recipe for me yet, Mommy?" Finally, I decided to come up with my own variation of the Fannie Farmer recipe for Boston Cookies. I told Gordon that I had found just the right recipe for him. With this, he was delighted and very anxious to begin.

In preparing to make the cookies, I told Gordon that we would have to take out some butter from the refrigerator and leave it on the counter to soften a little so that it would be easy to mix with the other ingredients. Then, I called

his attention to the fact that baking the cookies required preheating the oven at 350° degrees. Therefore, we would have to get the oven ready before mixing the ingredients, I asked Gordon if he could point to 350° on the oven dial. After a little assistance, he located the number. I then turned on the gas and set the oven at the proper temperature.

Next, we discussed the ingredients needed. Gordon was pleased to hear that the basic items needed were flour, sugar, and butter even though a little baking powder, salt, cinnamon, and two well beaten eggs must be included as well. Hearing that well beaten eggs were required, Gordon wanted to begin beating the eggs with the egg beater immediately. I agreed that it might be a good idea for him to get started with the eggs. So, I passed two eggs and a pot to him. He then got the egg beater from a cabinet drawer, pulled his stool up to the counter and began to work. I proceeded to take out the other utensils and ingredients that were needed and then assisted Gordon by holding the pot steady as he beat the eggs. Noticing that the eggs seemed free of shell particles, I commented to Gordon that he was becoming quite an expert at breaking the shells and emptying out the eggs. Following the egg beating, I told Gordon that we would have to mix the following ingredients together:

2 cups of flour

1/2 teaspoon of baking powder

A few grains of salt

1 teaspoon of cinnamon

Together, we measured out the flour and cinnamon, but Gordon leveled off the baking powder all by himself. I then poured a little salt into the palm of my hand and asked Gordon to pick up the tiniest bit with his index finger and thumb. "Just a few grains" I reminded him. These dry ingredients were placed into a large bowl and Gordon begain to stir them together.

The next step included creaming together 1/2 cup of butter and 1 cup of sugar. These ingredients were placed into a pot. I held the pot steady as Gordon attempted to cream the ingredients using the egg beater. Because the mixture was so stiff, we decided to take turns using the beater. The mixture softened some, but we did not get very far until we added the eggs to the butter and sugar. After the butter, sugar, and eggs were sufficiently mixed, Gordon stirred in the dry ingredients. I gave a final stir to the mixture as Gordon licked his finger which he had quickly dipped into the bowl upon completing his turn at mixing.

When I mentioned that it was time for baking, Gordon ran to get the cutter from his play dough set. He wanted to shape the cookies as Arthur had done in the story. However, I told him that since this mixture was very stiff and rather sticky, it would be better to drop it onto the pan from a spoon. Rather reluctantly, he decided to go along with the drop cookies. I told him that we could try making shaped cookies at another time. In spite of the dropped cookies, Gordon seemed delighted at what we had accomplished. So, we

greased two cookies sheets and arranged spoonfuls of the batter on the sheets. We then placed the cookie sheets into the oven. Baking time was set for 12 minutes.

We looked at the clock and discussed where the long hand of the clock would be when the 12 minutes needed for baking were up, Gordon, however, lost interest in the clock and walked away. When the time came and I noticed that the cookies were delicately browned, I removed the cookies from the oven and arranged them on a plate which was placed on the table. A short while later, Gordon returned to the kitchen, saw the cookies, and took one from the plate. He took a small bite from the cookie and for a while looked quite serious and judgemental. Soon, however, the expression on his face changed to a smile as he said "Yummy."

CHAPTER 2

EXPLORING ACTIVITIES

Air in Water

Blowing Bubbles

Immersing Bottles in Water

Sponges in Water

Using a Funnel

Pouring Measures

A Thermometer in Water

Floating and Sinking

Dissolving Substances

Glass Sounds

Matching Jars and Lids

Measuring

Using Food Dye

Filling Containers

Categorizing Objects

Collecting Seeds

Exploring Foods

Observing Food Changes

EXPLORING ACTIVITIES

Exploring the environment is a natural activity in childhood, and the environment of the kitchen offers many interesting things for children to explore. The following activities offer ideas to help children become acquainted with the characteristics and properties of things in their environment. These activities also encourage children to inquire and to think.

Air in Water

Materials: A container of water and a straw.

Ask the child to blow air on the palm of his or her hand with the straw and to tell what is felt. Then ask the child to blow air into the water and watch to see what happens. Allow the child to play freely with the straw and water. Help the child to understand, if necessary, that air entered the water to form bubbles.

Blowing Bubbles

Materials: A cup and a straw, scissors, water, liquid dishwashing detergent.

Help the child to prepare the straw for blowing by cutting three or four small slits of about 1/2 inch in length at one end of the straw. The slits should then be bent outwards to resemble a wheel. The child should then mix about a teaspoon full of the detergent with a half cup of

water. The slit end of the straw should be dipped into the liquid and other end used for blowing.

Allow the child to have fun blowing bubbles. You may wish to place a large pan before the child since the kitchen may not permit the child to blow freely or, you may wish to have the child engage in this activity at the kitchen sink. Interesting play can take place as bubbles settle at the bottom of a pan or at the base of the sink. As the child engages in bubble blowing, talk to him or her about what happens when he or she blows hard and when he or she blows gently. Talk about the inside of the bubble and the outside of the bubble.

Immersing Bottles in Water

Materials: A large dish pan, water, and bottles.

Fill the pan with water. Have the child immerse bottles into the water and watch to see what happens. See if the child can explain what happens. If it is not clear to him or her, you may wish to ask questions and give insights which help the child understand that the bottles were filled with air before being placed in the water, but once immersed in the water, air was pushed out by the water thus forcing the air bubbles into the water.

Sponges in Water

Materials: A dry sponge, a pan, and water.

Young children seem to delight in squeezing things and

sponges are most appropriate for this purpose. A child can place a dry sponge in a pan of water and observe how the sponge absorbs the water. This may be an excellent time to introduce the word "absorb" to a young child. The child can play freely with one or more sponges in the water. He or she may even wish to fill up a second container with water squeezed from the sponge.

Using a Funnel

Materials: A funnel, a large pot, water, plastic bottles, a plastic cup.

Give the child a funnel, cup, and bottles to play with in the pot of water. Allow him or her to handle the materials as he or she wishes. Later, if necessary, show the child how to use a cup to pour water through the funnel into the bottles.

Pouring Measures

Materials: A measuring cup with a spout, a few clear plastic cups and/or jars, water, a large pan.

Let the child use the measuring cup to pour water into the plastic containers. In addition, however, this is an ideal time to introduce the young child to the measures of a full container and a half container. Using a bright colored marker or rubber band, mark the outside of one container to indicate the full level and the outside of another to show one-half full. Discuss these levels with the child. Then,

invite him or her to pour up a full container of water and another container one-half full with water.

A Thermometer in Water

Materials: A thermometer, a clear plastic cup filled with ice cold water, a clear plastic cup filled with warm water.

Ask the child to help you fill the cups with the appropriate substances. If this is not feasible, have the child explore the material in the filled cups and then tell you how the two substances differ. Discuss the thermometer and its purpose with the child. Then, have the child place the thermometer in one cup and observe changes in the mercury or alchohol level. Similarly, the child can place the thermometer in the second cup and watch the temperature indicator move. As the child plays with the thermometer, discuss with him or her why the line in the thermometer moves up and down.

Floating and Sinking

Materials: A large pan with water, a variety of small objects.

Give the child the pan of water and the objects which he can experiment with to determine if they sink or float. You might tell the child that the object sinks if it is pulled down to the bottom of the pan and the object floats if it

remains at the top of the water. A child may even be given a "Sink Box" and a "Float Box" in which he or she can categorize objects which have been tested. There are many objects which you can find for this activity. Capped jars, metal spoons, plastic tableware, beans, nuts, lids, lemons, and potatoes are examples.

Dissolving Substances

Materials: Sugar (granulated or cubes), salt, flour, powdered drink mix, several clear plastic cups, water, and a spoon.

Have the child place a sugar cube or a teaspoon of sugar into one cup of water and stir. Ask the child to tell what happened to the sugar. Here, a nice new word for a young child's vocabulary is "dissolved."

Then, provide the child with several cups of water and with a variety of other substances with which to experiment. Use whatever substances are at hand. As suggested above, a few might be flour, salt, and powdered drink mix. However, do not limit the child's activity to these suggestions. In carrying out this activity, it would be good to have the child try to guess ahead of time whether or not a particular substance will dissolve in water, since all good scientists and researchers like to make predictions about the outcomes of their experiments.

Glass Sounds

Materials: Several glasses or soft drink bottles, and water.

Have the child fill the drinking glasses or soft drink bottles with varying levels of water. Then ask him or her to tap the outside of each container with a long steel or silver spoon. As the child hears the different tones created by the glasses, he will soon discover that he has made a musical instrument. The glasses or bottles can then be arranged in order according to the tones they produce. In using soft drink bottles, an interesting twist is to have the child blow over the top of each bottle to produce the sound rather than to strike the bottles with the spoon.

Matching Jars and Lids

Materials: Several jars with screw-on lids.

Present the child with several jars complete with lids screwed on. Explain to the child that for each jar there is a cover that fits. Then have the child unscrew the lids and scramble them around on a table top. After this, the child can proceed to fit each bottle with an appropriate lid.

Measuring

Using a ruler or tape measurer with inches or centimeters, a child can learn to measure and then spend time in the kitchen measuring objects found there. The width of the refrigerator, the length of an egg carton, and the width of a cookbook are a few examples of objects which can be measured.

Using Food Dye

Materials: A few plastic cups, water, food dye, materials to be dyed such as cloth and paper.

Have the child pour small amounts of water into two or three small plastic cups and then, using a different color for each cup, squeeze two drops of food dye into each cup. The child can use the colors to dye or make designs on the materials provided.

It can also be fun for the child to experiment with combining cups of colored water. For example, what a delight for a young child to discover that mixing blue and yellow will produce green.

Filling Containers

Materials: A variety of empty food containers or small pots, dried beans, dried peas, or nuts.

Beans, peas and nuts make ideal objects for counting and for filling up containers. For this activity, provide a few empty containers such as bottles, jars, plastic food storage containers, or small pots. Have the child put the beans, peas, or nuts into containers to fill them completely or to designated levels. If the child can count you may suggest that he or she count the objects as they are placed in the containers. For example, you may have the outside of the containers marked at 1/2, 1/4, and 3/4 and indicate to the child from time to time to fill to a certain level. For the child who is able to count, there may be times when he or she

may wish to predict how many objects will be needed to fill a containers to a certain level.

Categorizing Objects

Materials: A large container, beans, peas, buttons, nuts, fruit seeds, an egg carton.

Have the child fill the large container with all the objects you have provided - beans, peas, nuts, etc. Use whatever other objects you feel are appropriate. Then, the child can use the egg carton for grouping like things together. The child might even be encouraged to identify the number in each group and discuss common properties of group members. For example, a child might say "I have ten beans. They are all hard and round."

Collecting Seeds

Materials: An apple, grapes, cherries, olives, plums, an orange, or other fruits,

Present the child with a variety of fruit samples and allow him or her to explore to find seeds. The child can collect seeds, label them by drawing pictures, allow time for the seeds to dry, plant the seeds, and see what happens.

Exploring Foods

The child will find it interesting to examine the make-up of fruits, eggs, nuts, and vegetables. You may wish to take time to point out such things as the yolk, white, and membrane of the egg and their roles in the reproduction of a

new chicken. You may wish to point out the parts of plants using vegetables. Discuss, for example, roots which are eaten such as carrots or turnips. As a whole, help to make the child more aware of the properties of the foods with which he comes in contact.

Observing Food Changes

Provide the child with opportunities to observe food changes and, thereby, become aware of the fact that heat and chemical substances can produce changes in foods. The following are examples of activities that will allow a child to observe food changes.

a) Butter-Margarine

Allow the child to handle margarine or butter and to observe what happens when this food is left out on the table or in a warm place for a period of time. Then, the child can find out what happens when the butter or margarine is placed in the refrigerator. Discuss the reason for the changes in the food with the child.

b) Syrup, Honey, Dressing

Allow the child to pour honey, syrup or dressing which has been refrigerated as well as that which has been left in warm places. Again, discuss the differences observed in the cold and warm foods and the reason for the differences.

c) Jello

Give the child a small amount of prepared jello to play with. Have the child observe what happens when warm water is poured over the jello. Also, be sure to let the child assist you in preparing jello.

d) Baking Foods

If you have a floor model stove with a glass door, to the oven, have the child watch from time to time while the oven is in use to note the changes in food produced by heat.

e) Baking Powder and Yeast

The child can assist you in the preparation of foods which require baking powder and yeast. Have the child note the difference between a mixture with baking powder added and a similar mixture without baking powder. Further, in making biscuits, you may wish to include one biscuit in which the baking powder has been left out. Similarly, have the child note changes in food caused by yeast.

f) Popcorn

Have the child assist you when making popcorn. Call the child's attention to the change in corn as it is popping. With an automatic popcorn machine the child can watch the corn pop as well as hear the sounds.

CHAPTER 3

COOKING

Basic Activities:

Shelling

Mixing

Measuring and Adding

Peeling

Following Recipes

Greasing Pans

Blending

Cutting

Kneading

Foods for Children to Prepare:

Drinks

Breads and Cakes

Cold Treats

Eggs

Sandwiches

Butter

COOKING

Many foods can be prepared in whole or in part by young children. Feelings of accomplishment and satisfaction come to children when they eat or when others eat something that the children themselves have participated in preparing. Moreover, handling and manipulating foods, dealing with measures and completing projects are activities that provide children with rich experiences to aid in growth and development.

BASIC ACTIVITIES

Shelling

Allow the child to help you remove peas and beans from pods. Discuss with the child the fact that the peas and beans are the seeds of the vegetables. Attempts might be made to plant some seeds. Children might also enjoy removing the shells from peanuts and from cooked and raw eggs.

Mixing

Whenever the opportunity presents itself allow the child to stir and mix food materials. For example, the child might stir the batter for bread or cake while you add ingredients or prepare a pan for the oven.

Measuring and Adding

Discuss measures such as ounces and cups with young

children so that they can pour out required measures for food in cooking. For children who may have difficulty recognizing numbers, mark the outside of a clear cup and ask the child to pour the dry or liquid material to the mark.

A child can also learn to differentiate between a teaspoon and a tablespoon and, thereby, learn to add various ingredients or materials to mixtures when cooking. For children who can not handle measurements alone or who become frustrated in dealing with measures, the adult should handle this aspect of the cooking.

Peeling

There are some raw and cooked vegetables and fruits which can be peeled quite easily by a young child using only his hands and fingers. Bananas are good for beginners. Boiled potatoes, soft-skinned oranges, and onions slit in half are also appropriate for peeling. Later, you may wish to introduce the child to the vegetable peeler for certain items.

Following Recipes

Read over recipes with the child. Discuss the ingredients that will be used and the possible effects of using a particular ingredient. For example, "Why do you think we need sugar in baking these cookies?" or "What do you think would happen if we left out the water?"

Greasing Pans

Many baked foods require pans to be greased. Pan greasing can be done easily by a young child. Simply give the child a wrapper from a stick of butter or margarine and let him or her go to work. Rubbing the inside of a pan can be lots of fun.

Blending

Young children enjoy pushing buttons on the blender and watching foods change in texture. Whenever possible let you young child assist in preparing foods by pushing the correct button on the blender.

Cutting

With a plastic or blunt metal knife young children can cut soft items such as bananas, bread, dough, lunch meats and cheese. Teach the child to hold and use the knife properly.

Kneading

When making breads, children can assist throughout the entire process, but they particularly welcome the opportunity to help knead and "punch down" the dough. This is especially true when working with large quantities of dough.

* *

Note:

When preparing foods with a young child, care must be taken to properly supervise the child. Let the child know

his or her limits and take every measure to insure that safety is maintained.

Foods For Children To Prepare

The following are a few dishes or foods suitable for preparation in whole or in part by a young child. The list is only suggestive since there are endless possibilities for having your child experiment with the preparation of foods. At the end of this section you may wish to list other dishes which come to mind.

Drinks

By following directions a child can easily prepare a delicious drink for an individual or for the entire family. Have your child try some of the drinks described below.

a) Lemonade

Use your own favorite recipe in having a child make lemonade. Give some basic directions. For example, show the child how to measure out one tablespoon of lemon juice for each cup of water and demonstrate how to pour out just a little sugar at a time until the mixture is sweet enough.

b) Pink Lemonade

In order to make this drink, the child will just add a little maraschino cherry juice to the basic lemonade recipe.

c) Kool-Aid and Other Powdered Sweet Drinks

Drinks in this group are quite easy for children to make. Directions on the package usually call for stirring the powder into a glass or pitcher of water.

d) Milk from Instant Non-fat Dry Milk

This delicious and nourishing drink can be prepared quite easily by mixing the powder with water. Specific directions are given on the packages.

e) Orange Jubilee

In addition to simple drink mixtures, you may wish to have a child prepare a fancy concoction form time to time. The orange jubilee is such a drink. For this, the child will need:

1 1/2 cups of orange juice
1 pint soft vanilla ice cream
Cherries
Orange slices
4 plastic cups or small glasses

Directions to be given to the child are:

1. Put the ice cream and orange juice into a large bowl.
2. Stir the mixture until it is smooth.
3. Pour the mixture into the cups or glasses with a ladle or cup with spout.
4. Decorate each cup or glass with cherries and orange slices.

Breads and Cakes

a) Toast

Young children love to play with toasters. Give your child an opportunity to use the toaster properly. Show him or her how to set the dial for light, medium, or dark toast, and where to place the bread into the toaster. Watch the delight in the young child's eyes as he or she waits for the toast to pop up.

b) Mixes

A variety of tasty, easy to prepare bread and cake mixes are available at most grocery stores. Such mixes can be prepared almost as efficiently by a young child as by an adult. Corn muffin mixes, for example, usually require adding only a small amount of milk and one egg. The more practice a child has in preparing a mixture for baking, the better he or she becomes at doing it. Usually, with just an extra stir or two, you will be ready to place the mixture into a pan for baking. The child may want to help pour the mixture into the pan, but you alone should place the pan into the oven.

Handling the liquid measures required for the mixes will provide children with many practical opportunities to learn about measuring units and about measuring techniques. In most cases, the adult will have to provide the child with an appropriate and easy to handle quantity of the liquid which is poured into the measuring cup or spoon. It would not be

wise, for example, to hand a young child a half-gallon carton of milk from which to pour a half cup full for mixing purposes.

Cold Treats

Most children enjoy eating cold treats such as popsicles and slushes, particularly when the weather is warm. These treats are quite easy for children to prepare. Suggestions are given below.

a) Popsicles

Your child can prepare a popsicle by pouring a favorite fruit juice or sweet drink into a small paper cup. Place the cup into the freezer for the child. Before the liquid is completely frozen, remove the cup from the freezer and have the child place a popsicle stick or small wooden spoon into the center of the cup. Then return the cup to the freezer for complete freezing of the liquid. When ready for a popsicle, the child can simply peel the paper from the frozen substance and eat.

b) Slushes

Slushes can be prepared according to the directions given above for popsicles. However, this treat should be sipped through a straw or eaten with a spoon when the liquid is only partially frozen.

Eggs

A child can assist in the preparation of some egg dishes. With deviled eggs, for example, the young child can scoop the egg yolks out of the hard-boiled eggs and help mix the yolks with mayonnaise and other ingredients. Then he or she can place the filling into the egg whites and, perhaps, sprinkle the deviled eggs with a little paprika. Some young children, particularly those four years old and above, can even help cut the whole cooked eggs in half with a plastic or blunt metal knife.

It is great fun for children to dye and decorate eggs. Follow the directions on the package of food dye before allowing your child to dye eggs. In addition, a variety of cut-outs and paste-ons are available for the decoration of eggs.

Sandwiches

a) Preparation of Sandwiches

For lunches and snacks a child can prepare his or her own simple sandwiches with such foods as peanut butter, cheese, meat, or a spread. Even adding a slice of tomato or a piece of lettuce between the slices of bread should be easy enough for a young child to handle. You may then wish to cut the sandwich or assist the child in cutting the sandwich with a blunt knife into part suitable for eating. Compact sandwiches, such as those made with peanut butter, can sometimes be cut into interesting shapes by the child with

cookie cutters. Below are two interesting twists on sandwiches. These tasty and nutritutious snacks can be prepared entirely by a young child.

b) Peanut Butter Faces

Provide the child with the following ingredients:

Peanut butter

Raisins

Large round crackers

Shredded coconut

Have the child spread peanut butter over a cracker and then use the raisins and coconut to make a face and hair over the peanut butter.

c) Banana Boat

For this sandwich, the child will use:

1 slice of bread

Peanut butter

1/2 medium sized banana

Stick-shaped pretzels (optional)

First, the child should peel a banana and break it in half. One-half can be set aside. Then have the child spread peanut butter on the bread. The banana half can be placed in the center of the slice. The bread should be brought up around the banana to blanket it. This constitutes the banana boat. A pretzel may be inserted into each end of

the sandwich if desired to give added dimension and to make the boat more secure.

Butter

Using heavy whipping cream, your child can very easily make butter for family use. Simply pour a small amount, perhaps two or three ounces, of whipping cream into a small jar. Tighten the cover on the jar and have the child shake until the butter is formed. Then, the child can remove the cover, pour off the thin milk which may remain on the top, spoon the butter onto a dish, and rinse it with cold water. The butter can be used immediately or placed in the refrigerator until ready for use.

The young child can assist in the preparation of many foods. The adult must use discretion in selecting dishes which a child can prepare with minimal assistance. Such cooking activities allow for growth in independence and self-sufficiency. There are a number of "cookbooks" for children on the market. These may be used to gain ideas for planning cooking experiences in the kitchen.

There is much fun and learning for children in cooking.

CHAPTER 4

CHORES

Putting Away Flatware

Setting the Table

Bringing Food Items and Utensils

Putting Away Groceries

Wiping Dining Mats

Dusting

Folding Napkins

Marking the Calendar

Sweeping and Holding the Dust Pan

Cleaning Up

Washing Dishes

CHORES

Children need to develop discipline and good work habits in order to lead happy productive lives. The kitchen provides opportunities for learning to be responsible, orderly, and able to complete tasks. Some chores that children can be responsible for are discussed below.

Putting Away Flatware

Once dishes have been washed and dried, a child can place silverware and flatware such as spoons and blunt knives into their proper places in flatware trays. However, sharp utensils should not be available to or near the child. Not only does putting away flatware help the child to develop good work habits and a sense of responsibility, it gives opportunities to practice sorting objects, an important activity in the development of thinking skills. In school, a child will have to sort shapes, colors, members of mathematical sets, etc. Sorting in the comfortable and practical home setting gives the child a head start for such school experiences.

Setting the Table

A most valuable learning activity for a child is that of setting the table properly. Show the child how to put table mats, napkins, and flatware in place for meals. It is best not to let a young child handle breakable dishes or glasses.

Bringing Food Items and Utensils

Call on your child for things you need while working like a spoon, a box of salt, a can of beans, etc. This gives the child the feeling of being recognized and helpful. It helps the child in listening, following directions, and in recognizing labels and words.

Putting Away Groceries

When you bring in groceries after marketing, there may be a number of items which a young child can place in cabinets or appropriate storage places. Small packages, cans, and fruits and vegetable that are stored outside the refrigerator are examples. Again, use your discretion and, by all means, avoid having a young child handle glass and other breakable or potentially dangerous items.

Wiping Dining Mats

After using place mats, provide your child with a damp sponge or cloth, and have him or her wipe off place mats. The child can also learn to put the mats in an appropriate place following the completion of a meal or snack.

Dusting

There may be objects in the kitchen such as chairs and table legs which gather dust from time to time. The child can dust these things for you. Show him or her how to dust away from the body and how to put things back into place

after dusting.

Folding Napkins

A young child can fold napkins for table settings. Demonstrate how to make rectangular and triangular folds, and give the child opportunities to practice making the folds. Not only is this activity good for developing little muscles, it also helps the child to become familiar with geometrical shapes.

Making the Calendar

Keeping a record of the days is always a very important and enjoyable task for the child who can recognize numbers. Have a large calendar posted in the kitchen within the reach of the child. Then let the child be responsible for placing a mark on the number for each day.

Sweeping and Holding the Dust Pan

Many young children love to sweep. Let your child help you sometimes by sweeping the kitchen floor while you hold the dust pan. If a child is to small to handle a large broom, provide him or her with a small one. When you wish to do the sweeping, let the child assist sometimes by holding the dust pan for you.

Cleaning up

A child should develop the habit of cleaning up spills and messy areas, particularly those which he or she creates. A damp sponge can be used to clean table tops while an old cloth or paper towels work well for cleaning spills on the kitchen floor.

Washing Dishes

Washing unbreakable dishes can be great fun for a young child. Let your child use a mild soap and water along with a sponge at the sink to wash a few dishes once in a while. The child can also rinse the dishes and dry them with a dish cloth.

NOTE:

It would be best not to force the young child into kitchen responsibilities and not to give too many responsibilities. Activities such as those listed above can be taken on gradually. To the extent possible, maintain the kitchen as a pleasant environment for the young child. Coercion in chores or in any other kitchen activity can bring about rebellion and disinterest on the part of the very young.

On the other hand, a child may sometimes be interested in performing a task which you may not think he or she is quite ready for. In this case, if it is something which does not involve a hazard, you may try letting the child proceed to do

it in his or her on way. For example, the child may be very anxious to try mopping the kitchen floor. At an appropriate time, you may let him or her have a mop which has been dampened and proceed to "mop". This action may provide a big boost for a little child's ego.

CHAPTER 5

PLAY

Nesting

Water Play

Boxes

Plastic Spoons

Food Dye

Dough

Paper Bags

Egg Cartons

Milk and Juice Cartons

Vegetable Stamping

Paper Cups

Magnetic Letters and Numbers

A Pot and Spoon

Tongs

Supermarket

Tea Parties

Kitchen Mosaics

Straw Painting

String Painting

Stringing Macaroni

PLAY

One aspect growth and development which is vital to all young children is the need for adequate play experiences. Through play children create and recreate experiences. In play children manipulate their environment and in doing so, develop concepts and understandings about that environment. Play also helps children learn to interact with others or learn to be happy by themselves.

Young children bring freshness, creativity, and imagination to every play experience. They are not bound by preconceived notions about the proper use of a particular place or object. Underneath the kitchen table can easily be transformed into a play house to which an unsuspecting parent or sibling may invited. A pan of water can become a swimming pool for rubber characters to bathe in.

Parents and others in the home can contribute to the child's development by allowing him or her the freedom to play, and at times, by providing stimuli and offering suggestions. Some of the following activities may provide interesting play experiences for young children in the kitchen.

Nesting

Using plastic bowls or pots of varying sizes, a child can try stacking objects according to size. Not only is this activity fun, it also helps the child become aware of the

relative sizes of objects.

Water Play

Nothing is more fascinating and relaxing to children than playing in or with water.

a) Try placing a stool to the sink when it is not in use and letting the child play with water for a while. Sometimes providing a couple of pots or plastic containers along with a plastic pitcher or a plastic cup with a spout can aid the water play.

b) A child might also be given a pan of water to play with at the table or counter. Medicine droppers, plastic cups, and small plastic jars or bottles provide interesting tools in such play.

Boxes

Empty boxes from which foods and other kitchen supplies have been taken can be creatively utilized by children. Such boxes might become blocks, drums, cars, doll houses, boats, car ramps, garages and other things the imagination fashions.

Plastic Spoons

Plastic spoons can be used by a child for counting and designing, and for playing with other materials such as flour and water. Materials such as the spoons should be made available to young children. Adults can watch to see what happens.

Food Dye

Playing with food dye can provide many delightful experiences for a young child. In addition to experimenting to discover what colors are produced through combining dyes, children can dye paper, pieces of cloth, and even make blot designs.

Also, there is the charming custom of dying hard boiled eggs. This activity can be done not only at Eastertime but whenever it might provide fun and interest for a young child. There may be additional materials which you might suggest that a young child color with dye. Regardless of what is being dyed, be sure to cover work areas with lots of paper to avoid unnecessary cleaning.

Dough

Playing with dough allows a child to feel texture and weight, and through manipulation to identify properties of the dough. Moreover, this play allows a child to be creative and fashion his or her own dough product.

Dough Recipe:

- 1/4 pound of plain flour
- 1/2 ounce of salt
- water (enough to make dough pliable without being sticky)

Wrap the dough in a damp cloth or keep it in a plastic bag when not in use. This way the dough will last for several days use. Sometimes children enjoy playing with commercial

clay or dough in the kitchen when it is not convenient for them to make their own. So, keep a can of commercial dough handy.

Paper Bags

Young children are quite creative in the use of paper bags. They like to play with bags of all shapes and sizes. A mask, a puppet, a costume are some of the creations which might emerge from a child's play with bags. Perhaps no other room in a home provides a better supply of bags than the kitchen. However, adults must remember to keep all plastic bags away from children.

Egg Cartons

Most children enjoy playing with egg cartons. The holes in egg cartons can be used for counting, holding things, and sorting objects. In addition, cartons can be stacked, cut apart, or tied together in various ways to create interesting and decorative items. Egg carton caterpillars and egg carton wastepaper baskets are popular items.[7]

Milk and Juice Cartons

Cartons in which liquid foods have been pac[illegible]ged make good play equipment. Not only can children make use of these cartons in pouring and measuring, they can also use them for creating things such as houses and boats. Furthermore, children are good at stuffing and storing an incredible range

of items inside cartons. The cartons also make wonderful pots for planting seeds and growing young plants.

Vegetable Stamping

An interesting, creative activity for young children is vegetable stamping. Simply cut a desired pattern on a freshly cut end of a carrot or a potato. Have the child color the shaped end with water colors, tempera paint, or colored markers. Then the child can proceed to stamp various designs on paper.

Paper Cups

Paper cups are excellent for stacking and building. Think how exciting it might be for a young child to put together his or her own paper cup pyramid. Avoid styrofoam cups.

Magnetic Letters and Numbers

Keep magnetized letters and numbers close by when working in the kitchen. The door of the refrigerator can be used as a board on which the child can begin work and play with letters of the alphabet and with numbers.

A Pot and Spoon

If you do not mind a little noise in the kitchen once in a while, you can sometimes provide your child with a pot and a spoon to make music.

Tongs

Children like to pick up objects with tongs. Ice and nuts are favorite objects for picking up. Allow your child to use tongs to fill containers with ice and other materials. The child can also use the tongs simply for playing with objects.

Supermarket

The kitchen is the ideal spot in the house for playing supermarket. Just supply your child with a toy cash register and some bags. Even a few small canned goods or boxed products can be handled by the youngster. With a little adult stimulation, the little cashier can be prepared to go to work.

Tea Parties

Sometimes at the kitchen table or in a suitable area of the kitchen, a child may wish to set up a little party table with plastic dishes or tea sets. Foods such as juices, bread, and crackers can be used for the party. A single child may wish to include dolls and/or stuffed animals in the party.

Kitchen Mosaics

Through the use of foods such as dried peas, dried beans, and uncooked corn kernels, your child can construct a picture on a paper plate or piece of cardboard. Draw or have the

child draw a simple design on the plate or cardboard. The child should put paste on a small area of the design and then paste food to the area. This procedure should be repeated until the entire design is covered. Mosaic designs can be enhanced by the use of a variety of food colors.

Straw Painting

Straw painting is an activity which begins by placing a few globs of tempera paint on a sheet of paper. By blowing on the paint with a straw, the child can design his or her own abstract painting. Since this activity can create a mess, the child should wear a smock and the activity table should be protected.

String Painting

String painting is similar to straw painting in that it begins with small globs of paint on paper. Here, however, the child can paint a picture by gliding the tempera over the paper with a string.

Stringing Macaroni

By pulling a string through hollow pieces of uncooked macaroni, a child can create jewelry such as necklaces, bracelets and rings. A child can also string macaroni to spell out words or make simple sculptures.

Other

Books, pencils, crayons, a small chalkboard, glue, children's scissors, paper, and markers and samples of items that should be kept close at hand when a young child spends time in the kitchen. Time can be spent at the table writing, cutting, pasting, drawing, or looking at storybooks. This can all be done within the warm confines of the kitchen.

Some commercial games such as stacking toys, blocks, and puzzles, are appropriate for the kitchen. A record player, television set, and toy musical instruments may also be used by the child from time to time in the kitchen. Dolls, stuffed animals, and puppets are always good to have around.

CHAPTER 6

TALKING AND STORYTELLING

Talking

Storytelling

TALKING AND STORYTELLING

Parents should be aware of the need to listen to, talk to, and, at times, entertain young children. Such communication lays the foundation for the skills and learnings that children must acquire in formal school settings. Communication also helps to unite adults with their young children; it helps both adults and children to better understand and appreciate one another.

Talking

The young child develops skill in speaking and in conversing by having many opportunities to talk. For a parent and child, there is always something to talk about. So far as the kitchen is concerned, a parent can always discuss what is taking place in the kitchen. While cooking, for example, a mother might say "I am making a vegetable soup. First, I will put in the carrots. Next, I will add a couple of these potatoes,..." Such communication will benefit the child not only by exposing him or her to new learnings, but by letting the child know that he or she is important enough to be informed of what is taking place.

By conversing regularly with an adult, the child has opportunities to develop listening skills, comprehension skills, and vocabulary.[7] Moreover, talking allows the child to develop greater confidence in his or her ability to relate to others. Also, the child's emotional growth is fostered as

he or she shares thoughts and ideas with others.

In discussions with children, questioning is important. Adults can encourage children to think and to express themselves more clearly through the types of questions that they ask children. There are various ways to think about questions. One way is to determine whether or a the question provides the possibility of many answers or just a few. A question which allows for a very limited response can be considered a convergent question, whereas one which allows many varied responses is called a divergent question. A convergent type question, is, at times, all that is necessary in a particular situation in the kitchen. For example, an adult may ask "Susie, did I remember to turn off the oven light?" Here, the child's basic response is simply "yes" or "no".

Yet, whenever possible, it would help to motivate more critical and creative thinking on the part of a child if the adult poses questions in such a way as to allow for a range of answers. The following is an example, "Here, I am taking two eggs out of the carton. What do you think I am going to do with these eggs?"

In a convergent manner, a parent in the kitchen might ask "Do you think that the heat caused the water in the pot to evaporate?" The child can only respond with a yes or no answer. In a divergent way, after calling the child's attention to water vapor escaping from a boiling pot, the adult might ask "What do you think is causing the steam to

rise from the pot?" In like manner, instead of asking "Is yeast needed in making this bread?" You might ask "Why is yeast a necessary ingredient in making this bread?" or "What would happen if we forgot to add yeast to this bread mixture?" Divergent questions require children to be thoughtful and imaginative.

Questioning can be helpful in parent-child communication. Through questions, a parent can give the child opportunities to recall, compare, predict, and make judgements. When the situation is appropriate, questions can also allow the child to express his or her feelings and emotions. It is equally important for the parent to listen to the child and to respond to the child's ideas and questions. Open, honest, two-way parent-child communication is essential to the emotional and intellectual development of the young child.

Storytelling

Story telling is an art which adults have used throughout the ages to entertain and enlighten children. The young child is rich in imaginative and creative spirit and succumbs easily to the well chosen and well told tale. Storytelling provides the child with an enjoyable experience, but its pleasure is found in the storyteller as well as in the child. Not only does it make the parent or parent surrogate pleased to see a child happy, but in making a story vivid for someone else, the storyteller releases emotions and share his or her creativity. The experience becomes

satisfying to the adult as well as to the child.

A child benefits in special ways from listening to a story. He or she is able to identify with characters. A child can also enjoy the sounds of oral language, the informal atmosphere, and the warm intimate feelings of sharing something pleasurable with a special person. He or she is exposed to model language patterns and new words.

Vocabulary is strengthened by hearing words introduced and repeated in the context of a story. The listening and attention which storytelling demands are also worth noting. In order to grasp ideas, the child must be attentive and must concentrate on the ideas transmitted by the teller.

Some stories are especially appropriate for telling. Folk tales, for the most part, have been handed down by word of mouth. To relate these stories in their unique spirit, telling rather than reading is the most desirable manner of presentation. In addition to folk tales, young children enjoy hearing stories with action and simple plots. They also enjoy having opportunities to join in repetitions and to supply details. Millions of Cats by Wanda Gag is an example of a story which allows children to join in refrains.[8] Such participatory experiences not only help children to enjoy stories more fully, they inspire children to want to tell stories on their own.

A final point to remember in selecting stories to tell is that sincerity is needed on the part of the teller. Sincerity and enthusiasm on the part of the storyteller is

what gives storytelling its artistic quality. The adult should relate stories to which he or she can give life. Four and five year olds can be very perceptive individuals, and they can tell when an adult does not have his or her heart in the storytelling.

Those who care for young children should have a small repertoire of children's stories committed to memory so that when the mood arises, it will be easy to engage in storytelling. Old favorites such as the following are always popular with the very young:

The Gingerbread Boy
The Three Little Pigs
Henny Penny
The Little Red Hen
The Three Billy Goats Gruff
Goldilocks and the Three Bears
Johnny-Cake
The Old Woman and Her Pig

Many good stories are available for storytelling. Public librarians can offer helpful suggestions to parents. In addition to drawing on children's literature, parents can create stories. They can also tell stories about their own personal experiences, especially about their childhood. Children are delighted by such childhood stories and sometimes ask to hear them again and again.

NOTES

[1]Millie Almy, Roma Gans, and Celia B. Stendler, Teaching Young Children (New York: World Book Co., 1967).

[2]RuthM. Beard, An Outline of Piaget's Developmental Psychology (London: Routledge and Kegan Pa, 1979).

[3]Ibid.

[4]Selma H. Fraiberg, The Magic Years (New York: Charles Scribner, 1981), p. 299.

[5]Lillian Hoban, Arthur's Christmas Cookies (New York: Harper and Row, 1972).

[6]The All New Fannie Farmer Boston Cooking School Cookbook. 10th ed., Revised by Wilma L. Perkins (New York: Bantam Books, 1959).

[7]H.S. Wiener, Talk with Your Child: Using Conversation to Enhance Language Development (New York: Penguin Books, 1988).

[8]Wanda Gag, Millions of Cats (New York: Coward McCann, 1929).

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